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ABSTRACT

This book examines women's lives, past and present, to understand experiences of mature women students in universities. Chapter 1 explores current research and literature on mature women students in adult and continuing education. Chapter 2 reflects on the value of sociology and particular theoretical approaches such as feminist sociology, action, and structural theories for understanding experiences of mature women students in universities. Chapter 3 examines the research method and interviews as life histories and describes how the interviewing approach synthesized and combined two sociological perspectives: feminism and interactionism. Chapter 4 sketches institutional culture and behavior at Warwick University in England. Chapter 5 explores the relationship between schooling, family life, and learning as an adult and the connection of experiences of initial education with class and gender. Chapter 6 compares women's and men's occupations, looks at linking working and domestic lives, and relates employment and domesticity to the quest for fulfillment. Chapter 7 examines how adult students' public and private lives are interrelated and conflicted. Chapter 8 explores how women's involvement in the educational sphere impinged upon relationships in the domestic sphere. Chapter 9 focuses on how dominant the student identity had become in their lives. Chapter 10 concludes that learning brought about personal empowerment but women were not liberated from gender and class inequalities in the family and society. The book contains 283 references and an index. (YLB)

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